

## Chapter 24

# Development Interventions and Masculinity in Transition: A Study Among Marma Men Living in Bandarban Sadar in Chittagong Hill Tracts

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### ABSTRACT

*Intent of the study was to trace the shifts in masculinities among three generation's indigenous Marma men due to their increased affiliation with development interventions and its impact on gender relationship in Marma community. Following qualitative methodology, total 28 in-depth interviews and 10 focus group discussions were carried out at Bandarban Sadar, Tigerpara and Balaghata areas. Study covered 70 Marma men of three different generations, where age ranged from 13 to 60 years above. It reflected that to keep pace with modernization or to fill up increased gap with Bengali settlers, indigenous men are moving from primitive non hegemonic order to hegemonic order as existing situation is forcing them to grow up with competitive mind for survival purpose. Gigantic gap among men of three generations, in terms of their perception on what it ought to be a 'real man' signifies how stereotypical gender norms, values, practices are getting engrossed in indigenous Marma communities which is putting serious impact in gender relationships by leaving indigenous women in vulnerable state.*

### INTRODUCTION

The study stems from the need of understanding the impact of development interventions on the construction of masculinities in three generations indigenous Marma men and its impact on gender relationship in the studied community. With a view to generating in-depth understanding regarding the fact, the paper has been divided in four broader sections. First section elaborately focused on background, justification, objective and methodology of the study. Second and third sections endeavored to capture how perception

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3018-3.ch024

concerning development interventions and conception regarding 'real men' varies from one generation to another. With regard to 'real man' concept, the study focused on participant's imaginary picture of man who they idealize as the superlative characteristic of man. Finally the fourth section comes up with the interconnection between development intervention and masculinities to map out how transitional masculinities impact on gender relationship in the studied area.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Development is not a new phenomenon in the Chittagong Hill Tracts as from British period miniature interventions took place, but the region became a site of wide range of development activities after the liberation war. Erstwhile, indigenous people over this area were solely engaged in traditional way of living which kept them completely reliant on subsistence based economy. During that period; their livelihood utterly relied on shifting slash and burn cultivation which is traditionally called *jum*. Afterwards in colonial era and Pakistan period-introduction of private ownership, nationalization of land, introduction of reserved forest, commercial extraction of timber, increased linkage with low land, improved road networks and industrial use of resources has result in severe depletion of forest resources. Deforestation and land degradation had adversely affected the livelihood of the indigenous people in CHT, as most of them were solely depended on agriculture. After liberation, Bangladesh Government sponsored immigration of people from some of the heavily populated plains districts during the late 1970s and early 1980s. About 250,000 in-migrants (Bengalis from neighboring plains districts) were encouraged to settle during this period and they were primarily located on land that was already occupied or claimed by the indigenous residents. According to AmenaMohsin, in a resource poor and agrarian country ownership of land is associated with the power structure of the community. In the CHT the indigenous people have been alienated from their land through a state sponsored project of settlement of Bengalis into the hill (Mohsin, 2000:66). Beside Bengali settlement programs state sponsored other initiatives like-afforestation programme, militarization and commercial use of land, intensified telecommunication, road construction, electrification, and overall infrastructural facilities put severe impact on the livelihood pattern of Indigenous people. Moreover, number of Bengali settlers got higher due to infrastructural advancement which in result promoted multiculturalism in this area. The rise of Bengali population in the CHT after liberation has dramatically changed the ratio of indigenous communities and Bengalis. According to Asian Indigenous people's pact at the time of independence of India and Pakistan, the total population of CHT was only 247,053. Out of this number, only 2.5per cent were Bengali (including 1.5 percent of whom were Bengali Muslims). But after 20 years of the Pakistan period and 31 years of the Bangladesh period, the demography of CHT has significantly changed especially after the systematic illegal settlement of Bengali Muslims by the successive governments. (AIPP,2007). According to the provisional census report of 2001, the total population of the CHT was 1,342,740 (including ethnic Bengali and settlers). Of this number, 736,682 were Jumma (who are less than 0.5per cent of the population of the country) and 606,058 were Bengali.

Although the size of indigenous people in the CHT in 2001 was still larger than Bengali population, they become marginal in the city centers and most of the business has gone under the control of the Bengalis. It is to be noted that, Bengali settlers tend to depend on surplus economy which has directed them to get engage with commercial use of land which is much related to capitalist thought. Again, the life style of people from low land background is way different than the life style of indigenous people

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